**Sunday Worship - 28th June – Anna Durkin-Auty**

**Bible Month Week 4 – The Story of Naomi**

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father

Thank you for bringing us safely into a brand new day, We give thanks and praise for the wonder of creation around us. We thank you for the gifts you bestow on us that enable us to take part in the world around us even when we feel disconnected. We thank you for the blessing of friends and family and for the gift of community around us. Whilst many of us still need to step back from the physical world we thank you that through the power of technology we can be right at the heart of all that is going on. However there are times when, for all sorts of reasons we don't take opportunities or we close our eyes to paths you call us down. In your loving and gentle ways guide us to hear and respond with integrity and with an open heart to your voice and all people that on earth do dwell, wherever they may be.

In the name of Christ

Amen

**Hymn:   Singing the Faith 1**

All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:  
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;  
come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;  
without our aid he did us make:  
we are his folk, he doth us feed;  
and for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise;  
approach with joy his courts unto;   
praise, laud, and bless his name always,  
for it is seemly so to do.

For why, the Lord our God is good;

his mercy is for ever sure;  
his truth at all times firmly stood,  
and shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
the God whom heaven and earth adore,  
from earth and from the angel host  
be praise and glory evermore.

William Kethe (*d.*1594)

**Reading: Ruth 4 1-22**

**Activity**:    How we have stayed connected and grown together during adversity?

**Sermon**: Growing and connecting with family and beyond........  with integrity and faith.

What a joy it has been to walk through the book of Ruth during this month. It always amazes me how the folk that collate the lectionary seem to hit on the right readings at the right time. We see in the book of Ruth that not only is the geographical area in conflict and disarray but individuals within society are struggling too.

During lockdown we have all faced challenges – the loss of our freedom and the restrictions to our normal ways of life have been at times very difficult. I have heard many times through this time the phrase “we are in this together” and that this “has brought the best out in us”. The strength and the ingenuity of people within the communities around us, has helped us all to find some kind of new normal. Not least the technology that is enabling this to happen right now!!We see this real strength in the book of Ruth to come together to work as a team.

During this time our street and the ones nearest to us have joined together in ways I would never had thought possible. Some of you will know that I have been cooking a roast dinner for those who are shielding or away from family each week – for me a meal together has always been so important in the connection of people. The sharing of food was also clearly highlighted throughout Ruth focusing on the importance of making sur e everyone has enough. We have worked and found ways of connecting with each other whilst respecting the needs of a very diverse area.

Another strong feature within Ruth is the imagery of family and indeed the vision of extended family. One of the children in our street said to me during one of our street activities that “the street is like my lock down family” Family is so much more than our genetic connections. As someone who has been at boarding school where I had a school family and helped to care for children in other families and now being a step mum and step grandma (Bubble). I know just how much we can create in terms of connections in just our attitudes, our behaviours, our outlook and in sharing. But what for me is an overriding characteristic that shines through in Ruth is that of Integrity. The importance of staying true to your moral compass and doing what is right for the greater good. Each character in the story plays their part, displaying faith driven attitudes and behaviours. And as we see in this final chapter Boaz moves in to strengthen this family that Naomi and Ruth has built in a new environment where the family can grow with the birth of baby that will know nurture from each member however they are connected.

We I am sure have learned so much from this process we have been through – many may have realised that they are stronger than they realised. We are stronger together, whether we are family in the genetic sense of family though our shared world. We can, with that strength build and grow our communities and within them.

So until we meet again in the words of Bushra Batool

“Alone we are strong…. Together we are stronger”

**Hymn:  Singing the Faith 272**

From heaven you came, helpless babe,

entered our world, your glory veiled,  
not to be served but to serve,  
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
he calls us now to follow him,*

*to bring our lives as a daily offering  
of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears  
my heavy load he chose to bear;  
his heart with sorrow was torn,  
‘Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

Come see his hands and his feet,  
the scars that speak of sacrifice,  
hands that flung stars into space  
to cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve  
and in our lives enthrone him,  
each other's needs to prefer,  
for it is Christ we're serving.

*Graham Kendrick (b. 1950) CCL167911*

**Prayers for those around us.**

**Blessing**

May the road rise to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm on your face.

May the rains fall softly upon your fields until we meet again.

May God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

*Old Gaelic blessing.*